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TO ALL DIPLOMATIC AND CONSULAR POSTS COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RUEHTRO/AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI IMMEDIATE 0155
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RUEHFSI/DIR FSINFATC IMMEDIATE
RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RUEHPH/CDC ATLANTA IMMEDIATE 7905
RUCPDOG/ALL USDOC DISTDIR COLLECTIVE WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RHMCSUU/CDRAMC FT BELVOIR VA//AMCMI-SS// IMMEDIATE
RUEAHQA/HQ USAF WASHINGTON DC//XOXXI// IMMEDIATE
RHMCSUU/HQ AFOSI DOQ ANDREWS AFB MD//IVOA// IMMEDIATE
RHMCSUU/FAA NATIONAL HQ WASHINGTON DC//ACI-400// IMMEDIATE
RHMCSUU/COMNAVAIRSYSCOM PATUXENT RIVER MD//AIR1031B// IMMEDIATE
RHMFIUU/NRC WASHINGTON DC//INFOSEC// IMMEDIATE
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL//CCJ2-JIT// IMMEDIATE
RUCPCIM/CIM NTDB WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RHMCSUU/COGARD INTELCOORDCEN WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RHMFIUU/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE
RHMFISS/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL IMMEDIATE
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 STATE 104542

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [AMED](#) [AMGT](#) [CASC](#) [CMGT](#) [TBIO](#) [KFLU](#)

SUBJECT: 2009-H1N1: CONSULAR SERVICES FOR U.S. CITIZENS
ABROAD DURING A PANDEMIC

STATE 00104542 001.2 OF 003

REF.: (A) 09 STATE 043249 (B) 09 STATE 099088

11. SUMMARY: In June 2009, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared that a global pandemic was underway due to 2009-H1N1 influenza, also known as novel H1N1. Unlike avian influenza (H5N1), the disease caused by this strain of the influenza virus is far less severe, with a mortality rate similar to that of seasonal influenza. As a result, the Department's pandemic planning guidance has been updated to take severity into account. This cable provides guidance to Consular Section Chiefs and American Citizens Services (ACS) officers for the provision of services to U.S. citizens who remain abroad during a pandemic, regardless of severity. A warden message template for 2009-H1N1 pandemic influenza is provided at the end of the cable. END SUMMARY.

12. On June 11, 2009, the WHO declared that a global pandemic of novel influenza A (2009-H1N1) was underway by raising the worldwide pandemic alert level to Phase 6. Since the WHO pandemic declaration, the new 2009-H1N1 virus has continued to spread. Though the current strain of 2009-H1N1 influenza has a low mortality rate, and most people who become ill have recovered without requiring medical treatment, the U.S. Government (USG) remains concerned about the possibility of a severe influenza pandemic resulting from changes in the 2009-H1N1 virus or the emergence of an even newer influenza virus.

13. Though the Department's primary planning guidance continues to be that all overseas Americans should be prepared to remain abroad during a pandemic, severity, which has a close correlation to fatality rate, is now an important factor in applying this guidance. A document titled "Options During a Pandemic," which takes the new severity guidance into account, was recently published on CA's Internet website at http://www.travel.state.gov/travel/tips/health/health_3096.html

General Policy for Americans Abroad

¶4. Any U.S. citizen who chooses not to return to the United States via commercial means at the onset of a severe pandemic may have to remain abroad for the duration of the pandemic due to transportation disruptions and border closures. Those who choose to wait out a severe pandemic abroad are therefore urged to maintain adequate provisions for an infection wave or waves that could last from two to twelve weeks. Americans who travel abroad during the current 2009-H1N1 pandemic may face screening measures, isolation, or quarantine as local public health authorities seek to contain the spread of the virus and treat sick travelers.

¶5. Due to legal restrictions and a lack of sufficient resources, the Department is not/not in a position to provide private U.S. citizens residing or traveling abroad with pandemic-related supplies, medications or medical treatment, including vaccines. The Fact Sheet found at http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/health/health_1181.html provides guidance to private citizens on the advisability of obtaining an advance supply of antiviral medication for their period of stay overseas, along with other measures they can take to stay healthy. Posts may wish to further publicize this information by means of virtual town hall meetings, newsletters, and warden messages.

STATE 00104542 002.2 OF 003

¶6. In the event that the current pandemic becomes more severe, consular sections may have to temporarily suspend or limit non-emergency services. Consular Section Chiefs must coordinate any proposed drawdown or suspension of service with CA/EX. If authorized departure is implemented for a particular post, the Department will call the public's attention to the authorized departure by issuing a Travel Warning (TW). Once published, the TW must also be transmitted to the American community within post's consular district by means of a warden message.

Consular Contact with Influenza Patients

¶7. Though consular assistance to private citizens is likely to be limited during a pandemic, it should include communicating with family and friends on a sick or quarantined individual's behalf, monitoring quarantine/isolation conditions as permitted by local health authorities, arranging for transfers of funds or granting temporary subsistence loans, and providing information regarding the availability of medical care (to be paid for by the individual). Please note that public health officials are likely to prohibit direct contact with persons who are sick or quarantined; in such instances, consular access will be restricted to telephone calls, paper or electronic correspondence. The Department does not expect consular officers to personally visit influenza patients.

Warden Messages--Information on Screening, Isolation and Quarantine

¶8. It is extremely important that posts get the word out regarding host country entry/exit screening and quarantine procedures by means of warden messages, which should be posted to the Embassy/Consulate website and linked to the Country Specific Information site on www.travel.state.gov. In conjunction with these efforts, private citizens should be informed that the USG cannot demand their release if they have been detained or quarantined abroad in accordance

with public health and legal authorities. (Consular officers should be prepared to raise inadequate quarantine/isolation conditions, but should not try to intervene with the host government to shorten the period of time that someone is held.) Information on country entry/exit screening and quarantine procedures should also be entered into the "H1N1 10/09 Matrix" located at: <http://poems.ses.state.sbu/sites/portal/seso/cms/WebPages/Pandemic%20Flu.aspx>.

¶9. Posts must clear all health-related warden messages with the Regional Medical Officer or post's direct-hire Foreign Service Health Practitioner before sending them to CA/OCS/ACS for Department clearances. Warden messages should attribute medical guidance to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (HHS/CDC), the WHO, or local health authorities, as the Department is prohibited from providing specific medical advice or medical services to the public.

¶10. The following template is included to aid posts in formatting their warden messages. BEGIN TEMPLATE.

Warden Message
(Insert Post Name)
(Insert Date)

This Warden Message alerts U.S. citizens to the latest information regarding human cases of 2009-H1N1 influenza,

STATE 00104542 003.2 OF 003

sometimes referred to as novel H1N1 or swine flu. The (fill in the reporting authority) has reported (fill in outbreak information, pandemic declaration, etc.). (Insert adjective for host country) authorities have (fill in local actions being taken, particularly those that limit travel and involve entry/exit screening, quarantine, or isolation procedures; avoid commentary and speculation.)

If you are quarantined or placed in isolation due to 2009-H1N1 influenza, please contact the (Embassy/Consulate General/Consulate) at the number below and let us know, so we can monitor your situation. However, please be aware that the (Embassy/Consulate General/Consulate) cannot demand your immediate release if you have been detained or quarantined in accordance with local public health and legal authorities.

Due to legal restrictions and a lack of sufficient resources, the (Embassy/Consulate General/Consulate) is not in a position to provide private citizens with pandemic-related supplies, medications or medical treatment, including vaccines, and cannot provide specific medical advice. Questions and concerns about influenza or other illnesses should be directed to a medical professional. A list of local hospitals and doctors can be found on our website at (insert link to post's website).

For more information on how to prepare for a severe pandemic, please see the State Department "Pandemic Influenza Fact Sheet" and "Options During a Pandemic" flyer located on www.travel.state.gov. Detailed information about 2009-H1N1 influenza can be found on the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/>, the U.S. Government's federal influenza website at <http://www.flu.gov>, and the World Health Organization website at <http://www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/en/index.html>.

U.S. citizens residing or traveling in (insert name of country) are encouraged to register with the (Embassy/Consulate General/Consulate) through the State Department's travel registration website, <https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/ui/>, to obtain updated travel and security information. U.S. citizens without Internet access may register directly with the

(Embassy/Consulate General/Consulate). Registration is important; it allows the (Embassy/Consulate General/Consulate) and the State Department to assist you in an emergency.

The (Embassy/Consulate General/Consulate) is located at (insert street address, and also mailing address if this is different from street address.) The (Embassy/Consulate General/Consulate) telephone number is (insert telephone number); the (Embassy/Consulate General/Consulate) fax number is (insert ACS fax number). For after-hours emergencies, please call (insert after-hours emergency number).

END TEMPLATE.

¶11. Minimize considered.
CLINTON